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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRUSSELS 000314

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STATE PASS AF/C FOR CHRISTOPHER LAMORA AND EUR/WE FOR  
KATHERINE SHARP AND MARK POWELL,

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [CG](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: ACTING A/S CARTER'S MEETING WITH BELGIANS ON AFRICA

REF: BRUSSELS 267

Classified By: Charge Wayne Bush for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Acting A/S Carter had a positive exchange of views with the Belgian MFA Africa Team at a breakfast hosted by Charge February 26. The MFA was represented by Africa Director Guy Trouveroy, Minister De Gucht's Deputy Chef du Cabinet Jean-Luc Bodson, Great Lakes Envoy Karl Dehaene, and Congo Section Chief (and former Ambassador to Uganda) Koen Adam. The Belgians were primarily interested in the DRC. They expressed concerns with what they perceive as partner countries' "quick fix" approaches to solving problems in the eastern DRC, such as recent military actions and the Sarkozy plan. Acting A/S Carter shared U.S. perceptions on regional cooperation between the DRC and its neighbors. He said that DRC - Rwanda coordination in trying to control rebel leader Nkunda and the CNDP was leading to real cooperation and understanding in other areas. The U.S. had emphasized to Rwanda that stability in the east of Congo was important to Rwanda's goal of attracting investment. He also shared background information on the Uganda - DRC - southern Sudan coordinated military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The Belgians pushed for a focus on building the GDRC's governance capacity in the east, which Belgium sees as critical to DRC stability. Acting A/S Carter said the internal weakness of the government in Kinshasa was a major problem. On Sudan and Chad, the Belgians said they supported the EU Mission at French urging and because European unity was important. They were not optimistic that the refugees in Chad could ever return home, and posited that an independent southern Sudan would not be viable. Carter said several aspects of Africa policy will undergo review by the new administration, including Sudan and Somalia, which are priorities. He added the U.S. would likely name a Special Envoy for Sudan, and existing Great Lakes efforts would continue for now. End Summary.

Democratic Republic of the Congo  
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¶2. (C) Trouveroy said the Belgian Consulate in Lubumbashi would be opening soon, but that Bukavu was postponed due to ongoing operations in the Kivus. Dehaene and Adam shared Belgian perspectives on the Sarkozy plan after their briefing in Paris February 25. They said the plan's two main goals, getting at the root causes of the conflict in the east and stimulating regional cooperation, are messages the GOB has been pushing for years. The Belgians see this as French

activism that will push the GDRC to move faster than it is capable. France does not have diplomatic relations with Rwanda, and the Congolese might see this as a French effort to use the DRC to re-connect with Rwanda. Trouveroy expressed a general skepticism on partner countries' "quick fixes" like the Sarkozy plan or what he believed, based on media reports, was U.S. backing for joint DRC-Rwanda and DRC-Uganda operations in the East. He characterized the Ugandan action against the LRA as very negative in humanitarian terms due to the atrocities the LRA committed as they fled Ugandan forces. He also offered a critique of other countries' assumption that a quick diplomatic normalization between the DRC and Rwanda was in the offing; the DRC would be cautious and not move until the ground situation improved. Finally, Trouveroy said Belgium strongly believes the first goal of the international community should be to work on rebuilding the state capacity in the DRC.

13. (C) Acting A/S Carter shared U.S. views of cooperation and coordination between the DRC and its neighbors. He said the USG had received signals for some time that Uganda, the DRC, and the southern Sudanese were discussing action against the LRA, and noted that they were in fact coordinating well. At Uganda's request, the USG discussed options with the three neighbors to try to improve the outcome, and offered non-lethal support and advice. Uganda provided the attack force, and the southern Sudanese and the DRC provided blocking forces. Carter said the operation did not go well the first few days partly due to bad weather, but in the end, the Ugandans succeeded in the tactical goal of destroying LRA food and weapons caches and killing 100-150 out of the

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estimated 400-500 LRA soldiers. He shared the Belgian's revulsion at the LRA habit of slaughtering civilians and using hostages as diversions, and underscored the importance of eliminating the LRA as a threat to civilian populations.

14. (C) Carter also characterized U.S. efforts to promote improved DRC - Rwanda coordination on countering the CNDP and FDLR as positive. The U.S. has tried to convince the GOR that problems in the eastern DRC are also Rwandan concerns, and that a stable investment environment in Rwanda requires regional stability. The U.S. has also raised resource extraction and transparency during its discussions with the two countries. Kagame had wanted Kabila to work with Rwanda against the FDLR as a condition for help dealing with the CNDP, but Nkunda's attack on Goma and a more effective diplomatic approach to Kagame by Kabila, had persuaded Kagame to help Kabila counter the CNDP first. The DRC and Rwanda were already coordinating before the international community arrived. The U.S. noted that both countries now realize they need to work together to bring stability to eastern Congo. The Rwandans have sent intelligence officers to the Kivus to work with DRC forces. Carter said a political solution needs to be found to deal with the armed groups.

15. (C) Trouveroy acknowledged that regional collaboration was positive, but countered that Kabila was not an equal partner, due to the DRC's financial and capacity weakness. Belgium wants the international community to work on building the Congolese state and improving the GDRC's ability to project stability in the east. Acting A/S Carter replied that there were serious problems with the government in Kinshasa. Trouveroy pleaded for all countries to help the GDRC, which has been seeking money from donors because of very low exchange reserves, covering only a day or so of imports. Dehaene suggested outside support for operations be linked to improved DRC - Rwanda relations, but added the DRC was likely to remain cautious. Carter said both sides were careful and that Rwanda would not move quickly to normalize either.

Sudan - Chad  
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16. (C) Charge drew the discussion to the Belgian

participation in the EU mission in Chad to protect refugees from Darfur. Trouveroy said Belgium joined at French urging and contributed some special forces and logistics personnel. He said it was important for European nations to show unity, but doubted all countries would stay once the force was rehatted under U.N. auspices. Bodson said the force was just addressing the symptoms and not the root problems, but that, in effect, Darfur was already an empty land. The GOB sees numerous challenges to ending the mission and refugee return. Trouveroy said reports from the field in Sudan and Chad indicate problems have not been solved. He added that an independent southern Sudan would not be viable.

#### U.S. Policy Review

17. (C) Acting A/S Carter said the new U.S. administration will review a number of aspects of U.S. policy. He predicted that Sudan well as Somalia, would be among the highest U.S. priorities for Africa. He also opined that counterterrorism would remain an important component of U.S. policy in Africa, but would not be the sole driving force. Carter said the U.S. may name a Special Envoy for Sudan, and that Great Lakes issues for now would be handled by existing structures.

#### Comment

18. (C) The Belgians were very pleased to be able to discuss Africa policy with a senior State Department official. Our interlocutors truly appreciated the opportunity to exchange views on a region that is Belgium's number one foreign policy priority. Post believes bilateral meetings like Acting A/S Carter's should be the start of an expanding dialogue between Belgium and the United States on Africa that can leverage Belgian experience and help to shape Belgian perceptions and actions.

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